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# Aquaculture

Capturing Opportunity for Canadians

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Canada

## Growing Demand

The aquaculture sector has evolved into a strong and dynamic sector of the Canadian economy over the past 15 years, with revenues growing by more than 10 percent each year. In 2000, 22.8 percent of the total value harvested from living aquatic resources in Canada came from aquaculture.

Aquaculture is now one of the fastest-growing food industries in the world. Worldwide, aquaculture accounts for a full third of total fish supplies for human consumption. In fact, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that, by the year 2030, aquaculture will dominate fish supplies, with less than half of the fish consumed likely to come from wild fisheries.

## Canada's Aquaculture Potential

Canada's largest trading partner – the United States – represents a rapidly growing market for aquaculture products as its population adopts a more health-conscious diet.

A fledgling industry in the 1980s, aquaculture now generates economic activity approaching \$1 billion. The sector employs some 14,000 people directly and indirectly, and many of these people are employed by small and medium-sized enterprises.

With its extensive coastline, reputation for quality products, skilled labour, excellent food inspection system and proximity to growing markets, Canada is well positioned to benefit significantly from responsible and sustainable aquaculture development. Current growth projections suggest that the industry could spawn considerable employment for Canadians, particularly in rural and coastal communities.

## Canada's Aquaculture Challenge

While aquaculture offers enormous potential to Canadians, it presents social, economic and environmental challenges. With the cost of aquaculture production dropping worldwide, Canada must take action to ensure that it remains competitive while preserving key environmental and social values associated with Canada's aquatic resources.

### DFO VISION OF SUSTAINABLE AQUACULTURE:

"To benefit Canadians, now and in the future, through the culture of aquatic organisms, while upholding the ecological and socio-economic values associated with Canada's oceans and inland waters."

## Rising to the Challenge

To achieve its vision for aquaculture, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has developed a comprehensive Aquaculture Action Plan to increase public confidence in the sustainability of aquaculture and to support industry competitiveness in international markets. This Action Plan consists of six key elements:



### 1. Program for Sustainable Aquaculture

DFO already provides a solid scientific foundation for the conservation and protection of fish and fish habitat, as well as the conservation of marine ecosystems. These elements are important to the development of a sustainable aquaculture industry in Canada.

In August 2000, DFO launched its Program for Sustainable Aquaculture. The program reflects the federal government's commitment to increase scientific knowledge to support decision-making, strengthen measures to protect human health, and make the federal legislative and regulatory framework more responsive to public and industry needs.

Specifically, the program allocates \$75 million over five years (with \$15 million each year thereafter) in the following key areas:

- \$12.5 million in environmental and biological science to improve the federal government's capacity to assess and mitigate aquaculture's potential impacts on aquatic ecosystems;
- \$20 million for the Aquaculture Collaborative Research and Development Program, under which DFO will partner with industry by jointly funding R&D projects to enhance sector innovation and productivity;
- \$20 million to strengthen the Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program to maintain consumer and market confidence in the safety and quality of aquaculture products; and
- \$22.5 million to enhance the application of DFO's legislation, regulations and policies governing aquaculture, particularly as they relate to habitat management and navigation.

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## 2. Enabling Policy Environment

DFO has established a set of principles to guide its decision making and ensure that the department's actions support the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable aquaculture development.

Building on the Federal Aquaculture Development Strategy, these principles are intended to give the department a common vision for aquaculture and to establish the conditions necessary for DFO to facilitate the development of a sustainable aquaculture industry. These principles commit DFO to:

- ensuring that DFO's legislation and regulations are clear, efficient, effective, consistently applied and relevant to the sector;
- furthering its investment in environmental and biological science and strengthening departmental decision-making processes that affect aquaculture development;
- initiating relevant industry development programs, consistent with the department's mandate;
- providing Canadians with access to sound information relating to aquaculture development;
- respecting aboriginal and treaty rights and fostering the increased participation of interested aboriginal communities in aquaculture development;

- working with provincial and territorial governments to improve access to aquaculture sites and aquatic resources;
- making every effort to understand the needs of aquaculturists and to respond to challenges that may arise;
- working with other federal departments and the provinces and territories to coordinate policy development and integrate regulatory frameworks
- treating aquaculturists on an equal footing with other users of Canada's aquatic resources in the context of ecosystem-based and integrated management.

## 3. Enabling Regulatory Framework

The aquaculture industry needs regulations that will enable the industry to develop in a sustainable manner. DFO is taking action to ensure that its significant responsibilities relating to environmental protection, human and fish health, as well as marine safety, are effectively administered in a transparent manner and, where appropriate, harmonized with provincial requirements. In this manner, DFO will work toward developing an enabling regulatory framework for the aquaculture sector – one that clearly conveys the rules for the industry and allows the sector to position itself accordingly.

In 2001, the Commissioner for Aquaculture Development completed a review of the legal and regulatory framework governing aquaculture, and made a number of key recommendations. In response, DFO is taking steps to ensure that its legal framework is equitable, transparent and consistently applied by developing clear guidelines for:

- developing proposals for shellfish and finfish operations reviewed under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*;

- applying section 35 of the *Fisheries Act* to salmonid aquaculture;
- developing recommendations in relation to fisheries management responsibilities for aquaculture operations; and
- providing information required under the *Navigable Waters Protection Act*.

DFO is also seeking to identify and, where relevant, amend regulations to better govern the sustainable development of the sector.

## 4. Industry Development Programs

Although the industry is ultimately responsible for its commercial success, the federal government can contribute in certain areas. By investing in R&D, facilitating access to existing federal programs and initiating other industry development programs, DFO will help position the Canadian aquaculture sector as a world leader in the culture of high-quality, environmentally sound aquaculture products. An initiative to support aquatic animal health is one key area where the federal government could play a strategic role.

## 5. Inter-jurisdictional Cooperation

Responsibility for aquaculture is shared between the federal, provincial and territorial governments. Within the federal government alone, several departments and agencies influence aquaculture development. Effectively navigating this jurisdictional framework can present significant challenges to aquaculturists as they strive to remain competitive and grow high-quality products – ultimately generating wealth and other benefits for Canadians.

As the lead federal agency for aquaculture development, part of DFO's role is to ensure that all levels of government work cooperatively to support sustainable aquaculture development.

Through the Canadian Council of Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministers, DFO is working with provincial and territorial governments to develop appropriate solutions in priority areas, such as site access, aquatic animal health and R&D coordination.

DFO is also working with other federal departments to bring increased coherence to aquaculture-related legislation, policies and programs, and to match the developmental needs of the sector with available federal resources and expertise.

## 6. Communicating with Canadians

Access to sound information on human health, environmental protection and the socio-economic benefits associated with aquaculture production is key to ensuring the public's confidence that aquaculture is developing in a sustainable manner. Building public confidence also requires that the values and priorities of Canadians are understood and respected as government policies and programs are developed.

DFO is committed to providing Canadians with credible information and listening to their views on aquaculture development. DFO will continue to work with other federal agencies and with provincial and territorial governments, industry, communities, and individuals to achieve these goals.

## We Want to Hear From You

Creating the conditions to enable sustainable aquaculture development will require the ideas and involvement of all Canadians with a stake in the sector's future – including the aquaculture industry, aboriginal groups, fishery workers, governments, consumer and environmental organizations, and individual Canadians. To express your views or to learn more about the progress that DFO is making through its Aquaculture Action Plan please contact:

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